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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of attending college on educational attainment, educational aspirations, and income for 365 African American students at four-year institutions. Data came from the 1985 Freshman Survey, the 1989 Follow-up Survey, and the 1994 Follow-up Survey. Interviews were also conducted with 25 female African American college students at four predominantly white institutions. Results indicated that African American students showed clear patterns of capital conversion and reinvestment. Most had converted the cultural capital accumulated in college into full-time employment by 1994. For many of those working full-time, the conversion was particularly successful, since almost half of those working full-time in 1994 reported incomes between $30,000 and $50,000. Graduate school attendance was both a conversion and a reinvestment of capital accumulated in college. About half had made such a conversion and reinvestment by 1994. Being female, having a high grade point average (GPA), planning in 1989 to attend graduate school the following year, and having more intrinsic career aspirations increased the likelihood of attending graduate school by 1994. Many students' academic capital was deficient despite high aspirations and high achievement in high school. Despite academic difficulties, most students changed, rather than diminished, their aspirations. (Contains 50 references.) (SM)

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African American Students' Early Outcomes of College: Links between campus experiences and outcomes

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Introduction

African American college students have been and will be a focus of policymakers because historically Black students faced inequities and because a college education improves a person's economic chances. Although significant work remains before African Americans achieve equitable educational outcomes, substantial progress has been made following the epic 1954 Supreme Court school desegregation ruling. Despite that progress, African Americans remain decidedly underrepresented on the nation's campuses and continually lag behind Whites and Asian Americans in college enrollment, academic achievement and degree attainment (Nettles, 1991a; Carter and Wilson, 1996; Nettles and Perna, 1997; Freeman, 1997, 1999; Wilson, 1998). However, significant research documents the reasons behind this phenomenon (Carter and Wilson, 1996; Freeman, 1997, 1999; McDonough, Antonio, and Trent, 1997).

What is less well understood are the college experiences and outcomes for African Americans who do successfully negotiate the postsecondary educational system. Given the growing importance of graduate education and the severe underrepresentation of African Americans in graduate education, information on graduate school attendance and factors within the undergraduate environment which predict such enrollment is also needed. Furthermore, social class segmentation within the African American community is growing, yet little research has focused on how African American students' college outcomes are affected by social class background. To more closely examine the college outcomes for African American students, this multimethod study quantitatively investigates the impact of attending college on educational attainment, educational

aspirations and income for African American students at four year institutions. The study also utilizes qualitative interview data with 25 female African American college students at four Predominately White Institutions (PWI's) to contextualize and provide insights into college experiences and outcomes.

Literature Review

Although the percentage of African Americans who have obtained a Bachelor's degree has risen over the past 50 years (Hacker, 1995), Black students continue to be underrepresented in four year colleges and universities, constituting 10% of undergraduates (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2001). Underrepresentation continues in graduate and professional degree programs as well. Graduate and Professional degree program enrollment rates rose throughout the 1990's, but in 1999, only 9% of graduate students and 8% of professional students were African American (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002). Research on African American college choice has indicated that Black students perceive many barriers to their participation (Freeman, 1997, 1999) and use unique, culturally specific cultural capital in their college-choice decisions (McDonough, Antonio, and Trent, 1997). As a result, African American students are more likely to attend less selective institutions and are less likely to attend their first choice institution (McDonough, Antonio, Trent, 1997).

Once enrolled in college, African American students often experience academic difficulty and have lower GPA's than majority students (Nettles, 1991b; Allen and Haniff, 1991). Women experience a more difficult academic transition than men (Allen and Haniff, 1991). Furthermore, African American students at PWI's have lower GPA's

than students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) (Allen and Haniff, 1991).

PWI's, however, enroll the majority of African American students. Consistent research has shown that these students are less satisfied, socially isolated and less likely to persist than at historically black colleges (Fleming, 1984; Allen, 1988, 1991; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Thompson and Fretz, 1991; Astin 1993; D'Augelli and Hershberger, 1993; White, 1998). The social isolation of being a minority on campus may be compounded by low levels of involvement in student activities, in part because the activities offered are less appealing to African Americans (Davis, 1991; Taylor and Olswang, 1997). However, there is some evidence that African Americans who attend PWI's have high career and educational aspirations (Allen and Haniff, 1991; Jackson and Swan, 1991). Furthermore, those African American students who do persist and graduate from PWI's have higher incomes and access to valuable networks (Braddock and McPartland, 1988).

Although African American women at PWI's were socially isolated, Fleming (1984) found that these women more fully developed their intellectual skills than women at HBCU's. She attributed this to their ability to develop what she termed "assertiveness" because there were fewer dominant African American men on the PWI campuses. However, Jackson (1998) found that African American women at co-educational PWI's focused on their racial identities and did not develop their gender identities as fully. In that study, the coeducational PWI's focused support on African Americans students and on women students, and did not address the unique needs of

students who were both. Several authors have called for more research on African American women (Matthews and Jäckson, 1991; Haniff, 1991).

There is also a growing debate regarding the importance of class within the African American community (Wilson, 1980; West, 1994; Conley, 1999; Graham, 1999; Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). The African American middle class is growing rapidly, and recent work describes and examines this growing sector of society (Conley, 1999; Graham, 1999; Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). College attendance and degree completion have long been viewed as critical for social mobility (Karabel, 1972; Karabel and Astin, 1975; DiMaggio and Mohr, 1985; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991) and have been important in the growth of the African American middle class (Conley, 1999; Pattillo-McCoy, 1999). Little is known, however, about these successful African American college students' outcomes. Given the fact that PWI's enroll more African Americans who may have a financial advantage after graduation, more research is needed into the outcomes of college for African American students in general and particularly at PWI's. Such research may illuminate ways to foster greater success for African American college students, allowing a larger percentage to take their place in the new African American middle and upper middle classes.

Attending graduate school is one method of ensuring middle or upper middle class status, and graduate school attendance is growing for African Americans. In 1976, 6.3% of graduate students and 4.6% of professional degree students were African American (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002). By 1999, 9.3% of graduate students and 7.6% of professional students were African American. Research on factors that

promote African American graduate and professional enrollment is lacking, however (Allen, Epps, Haniff, 1991).

Conceptual Framework

Bourdieu (1977, 1990, 1994) uses the concepts of cultural capital and habitus within a particular field, or context, to explain the ways in which societal structures and opportunities combine with individual aspirations to reproduce the existing social structure. In addition to economic capital, each social class possesses social and cultural capital, which parents pass to children as attitudes, preferences, and behaviors that are invested for social profits (Lamont and Lareau, 1988). Educators differentially value high status cultural capital, rewarding the students from dominant culture backgrounds who possess this capital, leaving those students with non-dominant cultural capital "at-risk" for lower success rates in schools.

People from the same social class also have common perceptions of strategies for attaining the social profits they desire, identified as a person's habitus (Bourdieu, 1977; McDonough, Antonio and Horvat 1996). Habitus acts as a web of perceptions regarding the possible and appropriate action to take in a particular setting and to achieve a particular goal. These perceptions are shaped by a person's cultural background and values, which are part of social class.

In translating Bourdieu's concepts into the United States context, scholars have worked to incorporate the duality of race and class into their understandings of social status and social class (MacLeod, 1987; McDonough, Antonio and Trent, 1997; Davis, 1998, Horvat 2000). Researchers examining race and class in educational decisions have found that African Americans use unique cultural capital and elements of habitus in their

decisions regarding high school curricular offerings and college choice (MacLeod, 1987; McDonough, Antonio and Trent, 1997). The unique patterns of African American habitus and cultural capital also affected students' high school and college experiences (Horvat, 2000). Furthermore, Davis (1998) posited that HBCU's transmit cultural and social capital to the students who attend.

While attempting to incorporate the duality of race and class, researchers have failed to sufficiently consider the effects of gender. In the context of the United States social structure, gender contributes additional complexity to status considerations. Gender plays a role in the conversion of an educational investment because there are still occupational fields and positions to which few women gain access and which may be difficult for women to penetrate (Jackson, 1998). Furthermore, gender and educational outcomes are powerfully linked within the African American community, with African American women being more likely to enroll in college and receive a degree than are African American men (Fleming, 1984; Jackson, 1998).

Education in a Bourdieuian framework is most useful for its conversion potential. Scholars have shown that educational decisions and choices are made within the context of one's habitus in an attempt to accumulate capital that may be converted at a future date in pursuit of educational and occupational gains (MacLeod, 1987; Lareau, 1993; McDonough, Antonio, Horvat, 1996; McDonough, Antonio, Trent, 1997). Researchers have modeled the college-choice decisions of all students, and African American students specifically, based on a student's expectation that college is both a time to reinvest previously accumulated cultural capital and a time to accumulate additional cultural

capital useful for conversion in future educational and occupational attainment (McDonough, Antonio and Horvat, 1996; McDonough, Antonio and Trent, 1997).

Extending this model, African American students would be expected to continue to accumulate capital while in college in order to convert it to economic capital upon leaving college or in order to reinvest it by choosing to attend graduate school. African American students would be expected to show unique patterns of investment and conversion. Those patterns of investment and conversion are quantitatively tested utilizing longitudinal data in a study of African American students who first entered college in 1985 by investigating their income, educational attainment, and educational aspirations nine years after college entry. Patterns of investment and conversion are further investigated qualitatively through interviews with 25 African American female students at four institutions.

Methodology

This study utilized data from the national study of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) sponsored by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA and the American Council on Education. Specifically, the study used the 1985 Freshman Survey, the 1989 Follow-up Survey, and the 1994 Follow-Up Survey, yielding a sample of approximately 12,000 subjects that responded to all three surveys. The sample was restricted to African Americans who attended four year institutions, yielding a modest study sample of approximately 365 students.

In order to examine outcomes for students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, I determined the students' SES in 1985 using parental income, educational attainment, and occupational prestige obtained from the Freshman Survey (Nakao and

Treas, 1994). The data were carefully recoded into a SES variable that had a normal distribution and frequency. I used the lowest and highest SES quintiles as sub-samples defining students from low- and high-SES backgrounds. Each sub-sample consisted of approximately 73 students (72 low-SES and 73 high-SES).

The study sample is unique in several ways that may affect the findings. First of all, women are overrepresented in the sample, comprising 72% of the total. Next 70% of the students reported attending either a private university or a private college and 41% attended HBCU's. The mean parental education levels and income were also notable. Father and mother's average level of education was above a high school diploma, but less than a four year college degree, which is higher than average (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2001), but similar levels of parental education has been found in samples of college students (Taylor and Olswang, 1997). Finally, the sample's mean SAT Math score was 460 and the SAT Verbal score was 432, or 892 overall. These scores are consistent with the average African American score in 2000 (The College Board, 2001). However, in 1985 when these students entered college their SAT scores were above average.

The study's quantitative methodology utilized two sections. The first was descriptive information to determine the extent to which African American students' investment in attending college paid off. The questions were: What are students' 1994 income levels, educational attainments and educational aspirations and how do those outcomes vary by the socioeconomic background of the student? Unweighted crosstabulations of student outcomes reported on the 1994 Follow-up Survey including 1994 income, educational attainment, educational aspirations, and graduate school

attendance provide this information and highlight conversion differences. In keeping with a Bourdieuian framework, I chose to investigate outcomes that represent different conversion strategies.

The second segment of the design utilized stepwise logistic regression to determine variables associated with graduate school attendance for African American students. In order to gain insight into the effects of the college environment after controlling for input variables, I used the "Input-Environment-Outcome" (IEO) model as seen in previous research with college students (Astin, 1991, 1993; Sax, 2001). Graduate school attendance was an appropriate dependent variable because it is both a conversion and a reinvestment in a Bourdieuian framework. Logistic regression was utilized because of the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable (1 – did not attend graduate school, 2 – attended graduate school) (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 1989; Menard, 1995).

Listwise deletion resulted in a sample of 215 students, so an extremely parsimonious equation was necessary. Seventeen independent variables were fit to the regression in four temporally-ordered blocks: (1) background block which included gender, SAT scores, and SES; (2) whether or not the student attended a HBCU, since HBCU attendance has been linked to higher undergraduate outcomes; (3) college investment block, containing activities in the college environment; and (4) college conversion block, which included future plans (See Appendix A for all variables and blocking). The blocking was utilized in order to determine the effects of a variable block after controlling for the earlier blocks. Prior to the blocks of variables, the student's 1985 degree aspirations was forced into the regression equation as a pre-test variable. This

quantitative analysis, then, illuminates overall patterns of outcomes for African American students at four year institutions.

Qualitative analysis can provide greater insight and understanding into individual processes, such as how individuals experience college and make decisions about graduate school (Bogdan and Bicklen, 1992). This study utilized 25 interviews with African American women on four campuses to provide depth and context to understanding students' collegiate experiences and decisions about graduate study.

As part of a larger study, twenty-five African American females on four PWI's were interviewed in the last few months before graduation, as they prepared to transition out of college and into graduate school or the work force. Two of the campuses were highly selective and two were more selective. Students were identified with the assistance of their institutions using CIRP 1995 Freshman Survey. The information available from the Freshman Survey included students' SAT scores, degree aspirations, career aspirations, intended major, parental education information and family income.

During the interviews, I asked the students how they made decisions within the college environment regarding friends, work, major field, housing, and activities and how they made or are making decisions regarding future plans. Interviews were transcribed on an ongoing basis. The data was reviewed to allow patterns to emerge from the data and a coding schema was determined based on these patterns in an iterative process. Data from questions that are salient for understanding the quantitative results are included in this paper.

Descriptive Results

Overall, this sample of African American college students reported successful outcomes nine years after entering college. Eighty-three percent of African American students worked full time in 1994 and half had attended graduate school, as seen in table one. Students from low-SES backgrounds, however, were more likely to be working full time and less likely to have attended graduate school than were their high SES peers.

Fifty-three percent of African Americans reported earning less than $30,000, but, in three way crosstabulations, almost half (49%) of those working full-time were earning between $30,000 and $50,000. Again, low SES students reported incomes under $30,000 more often than their peers from high-SES backgrounds reported. High SES students were more likely to report incomes between $30,000 and $50,000 overall and when working full time than was the entire sample or the low SES students.

Insert table 1 about here

Results were similar for degree attainment. Three quarters of low SES students reported a BA as their highest degree compared to 65% of all students and 51% of high SES students. Overall, 16% of students had earned a Masters degree, but only 9% of the low SES students reported having earned a Masters. Overall PhD attainment was so small (<1%), it was not included in this part of the analysis. Four percent of students had earned MD's and six percent had earned JDs by 1994, but once again, the high SES students were more likely to report having done so than the overall sample and particularly more likely than the low SES students.

Low SES students were much more likely to aspire to Masters degrees than were high SES students, however (40% to 18%). Almost a third (30%) of low SES students planned to earn a PhD, compared to 36% of high SES students. Many more high SES

students aspired to MD's and JD's than low SES students, although it was interesting that a similar percentage of low SES students plan a MD as all students.

Although their aspirations were high, low SES students were less likely to be working on PhD's MD's or JD's than their high SES peers. The low SES students were, however, similar to all students and more likely than high SES students to have reported working toward a Masters degree in 1994. Overall, almost a quarter of students were enrolled in school in 1994, and low SES students were more likely to be enrolled (26%) than were their high SES peers. The low and high SES students may be working on different timelines, however. Forty percent of high SES student did not plan to return to school, versus 22% of low-SES students.

Regression Results

The overall logistic regression equation was a good fit with a Model Chi-Square significance at the $p<.0001$ level and an overall prediction rate of 75%. Preliminary analysis of the regression equations indicated that, overall, gender was a significant predictor of graduate school attendance, with African American women being far more likely, regardless of their families' SES, to attend graduate school than are African American men (see table 2). This result was not necessarily surprising given the lower attendance and graduation rates for African American males. Only one variable within the college environment, college GPA, significantly increased the likelihood of African American students attending graduate school by 1994. Planning in 1989 to attend graduate school the following year was a strong predictor of actually doing so by 1994, a result that was not surprising. Deciding on a career because it was interesting or challenging positively predicted graduate school attendance by 1994.

Insert table 2 about here

According to these regression results, then, the college GPA was an important predictor and was the only variable from the college environment to enter the equation. However, according to the literature, African American students tend to have relatively low GPA's. The same was true for students in the study sample; 80% reported a GPA equivalent to a "B" or less. Thirty-eight percent reported a GPA of "B", while 30% reported a "C+" or "B-," another 12% reported GPA's of "C" or less. At the other end of the spectrum, just 3% reported a GPA of "A" or "A+." However, since 50% had attended graduate school by 1994, these relatively modest GPA's did not hinder their graduate school aspirations.

Qualitative Results

The qualitative results provide interesting insight into issues of college GPA, degree aspirations and graduate school decisions. The qualitative sample of 25 African American women from four PWI's was also unique in ways that bear explanation. According to information on the Freshman Surveys, these women came from well-educated families. Eleven students had at least one parent with a graduate degree, and only four students had parents with no college experience. Their test scores were also above average; their average SAT math score was 588 and SAT Verbal was 548. When they entered college in 1995, they had high degree aspirations. Eleven sought a MD degree, 7 were aiming for PhD's, two students sought JD's and another two aspired to Masters degrees. Three students reported being undecided.

However, many students' aspirations changed when they encountered academic difficulty. Eleven students changed their major because of academic problems and only

three students did not experience some academic difficulty. One student who aspired to a PhD in Astrophysics changed her major to Romance Languages, despite a renowned Physics department on campus. She said of the physics department "They don't want you… unless you can handle it by yourself… it's a really violent, mean sort of weed out process." Another student who intended to major in Chemical Engineering changed to Political Science because she "had no real strong background in science" despite attending a well regarded high school specializing in math and science and receiving good high school math and science grades. Describing her initial academic experience as "terrible," she switched majors.

Many more of those who changed their majors originally intended to become doctors, but the reality of the academic expectations was too difficult. One said "I didn't do too well on my premed courses… I was just like this is not worth the stress. It's not worth my GPA… so I dropped it." That student majored instead in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. Another student told me "I thought I was going to be premed… then I took Chemistry and that was a big upset… I lost the premed route." Later in the interview she confided about that experience in chemistry "I was devastated… It's my first semester. I have all these bad grades." She changed her major to psychology.

For many of the students who experienced problems, the freshman and sophomore years were the most difficult. Math, science and writing were the areas in which they struggled most often. However, most who encountered difficulty, including those who changed their major, did manage to find subsequent academic success. The students quoted above, like most of those who did experience academic trouble, did not simply give up their high aspirations, they changed them. The student who intended to

be an Astrophysicist was planning, when I interviewed her, to work toward a PhD in education. She was investigating Masters programs to begin and hoped to enroll the Fall after she graduated. The young woman who was devastated by her first semester grades had been accepted into a prestigious Masters in Social Work (MSW) program. The other two students expected to return to graduate school within five years, but were unsure if they would seek a Masters degree or a PhD. These findings of students changing, but not diminishing their aspiration was also found in the quantitative study sample data (see table 3).

Insert table three about here

Although less than one fifth of students aspired to a Bachelor's degree in 1985, that percentage dropped steadily to 6% in 1994. The percentage of those desiring MD's also changed, in similar proportions to the Bachelor's degrees, ending at 7% in 1994. Students striving for Masters degrees and PhD's have increased over the nine year period. Students reporting Masters degrees as their goal increased 5% to 36% overall. Desires for PhD's rose 8% from 1985 to 1989 and another 4% by 1994, finishing at 33%. Students aiming for a JD increased 6% from 1985 to 1989, but then dropped 3% by 1994 to 11%.

Similar results came from the interviews. Of the eleven women who intended to become doctors, three were still considering it, but only one had been accepted into medical school. One planned to take a year off to work and was searching for a post-baccalaureate degree program. The third was hoping to find employment at a university and take the necessary course for applying to medical school.

Eighteen of the students included graduate school in their plans within a five year period following graduation, and three had been accepted when I interviewed them. In

addition to the woman accepted into the MSW program and the student headed for medical school, a third student had been accepted in a PhD program in Molecular Biology. One student was waiting to hear about her acceptance to law school. Four other students mentioned law school as a future possibility. Three mentioned pursuing a Masters in Business Administration (MBA). The others were considering several different Masters programs, including a Masters in Public Health and a Masters in Art Administration, or Doctoral programs. Only six students did not see graduate school as a possibility within five years. Three of those six had parents without college degrees.

So clearly, these students continued to have high aspirations, although their aspirations have changed since their initial entry to college. It was also possible that the students were refocusing their aspirations on less competitive, and less math and science oriented, areas such as education and social work. More evidence is needed, however, before that pattern becomes clear.

Discussion

What was clear from these results was that these African American students showed clear patterns of capital conversion and reinvestment. The vast majority of students converted the cultural capital accumulated in college into full time employment by 1994. For many of those working full time, the conversion was particularly successful, since almost half (49%) of those working full time in 1994 reported incomes between $30,000 and $50,000. Graduate school attendance was both a conversion and a reinvestment of capital accumulated in college. It was a strategy clearly favored by this group of students since 50% had made such a conversion and reinvestment by 1994.

Although limited by the small sample size, the regression results indicated that being female, having a high GPA, planning in 1989 to attend graduate school the following year as well as having career aspirations that are more intrinsic increased the likelihood of attending graduate school by 1994. Intrinsic reasons for choosing a career included finding a position rewarding, challenging or making a contribution to society. This unique set of variables may be indicative of a habitus that favors reinvestment in graduate school. Previous research has found that intrinsic career orientations may be indicative of a high status habitus favoring graduate school (Hoffnung and Sack, 1981; McDonough, Antonio, Horvat, 1996; Berger, Milem, Paulsen, 1998; Walpole, forthcoming).

Although a number of variables representing involvement with the college environment were in the regression equation, college GPA was the only one to enter the equation, and it remained a significant predictor of graduate school attendance. Prior research has found that African American students' involvement in campus activities was low as were their GPA's, particularly at PWI's (Allen and Haniff, 1991; Davis, 1991; Nettles, 1991b; Tayor and Olswang, 1997). Perhaps the low levels of involvement were indicative of a unique pattern of strategies African American students had for advancing through college. Despite students self-reported modest GPA's, college GPA was a significant predictor, indicating that the higher an African American student's GPA, the more likely he or she is to attend graduate school. Perhaps college faculty or peers viewed African American students with a high GPA's as having great potential and encouraged these students to attend graduate school.

The qualitative results provided insight into students' academic struggles and their strategies for minimizing the effects of a lower than desired academic record. Academic

capital, which includes specific types of courses, grades and test scores, was a type of cultural capital. However, within the context of these four universities, many students' academic capital was deficient despite the fact that all the women were high achievers with high aspirations. They also came from families that had achieved educationally -- only four students had parents without any college experience. This clearly showed a group of students whose families understood the value of postsecondary education. In addition to illuminating a habitus that values education, their educational achievement provided these students' families with knowledge and experience about undergraduate education. In a Bourdieuian framework that knowledge and experience provided cultural capital regarding the college going process (McDonough, 1997).

Yet, notwithstanding high academic achievement in high school, many students' academic capital was deficient. These 25 women were all intelligent, ambitious and goal oriented. However, eleven students changed their major because of academic problems and only three students did not experience some academic difficulty. Math, science and writing were particularly difficult for students.

However, in spite of the academic difficulties they encountered, most of these students, rather than allowing the difficulty to diminish their aspirations, most students changed them instead. Of the eleven women who were premed when they entered college, eight changed their aspirations, and only two of those were not considering graduate school at all in the future. Of the other six, one was considering law school and the other five were deciding on masters or doctoral degrees. In a Bourdieuian framework, this was indicative of a habitus that valued graduate level education and could improvise alternate strategies to obtain this goal. This habitus and strategizing was not surprising given that

11 students had at least one parent with a graduate degree. That graduate school experience provides those families with cultural capital regarding graduate school expectations and admission.

From crosstabulation results, it was also clear that the strategy of reinvesting in graduate school was favored by students from high SES backgrounds, since 63% had attended graduate school by 1994. Students from low SES backgrounds seemed to have different conversion strategies than their high SES peers, however, according to the data. The low SES students were more likely to report working full time (94% versus 78% of high SES) and less likely to have attended graduate school (37% of low SES versus 63% of high SES). These unique conversion strategies may be indicative of different habiti for students from low and high backgrounds, a finding indicated in previous research (Walpole, forthcoming).

Additionally there seems to have been unique reinvestment patterns related to degree aspirations. Students from high SES backgrounds reported having earned, planning on and working toward MD's and JD's at much higher rates than the students from low SES backgrounds report. The low SES students, in contrast, planned on and were working toward more Masters degrees. The results further seemed to imply a longer timeline for low SES students' reinvestment in graduate school, which may be part of their unique habitus.

Limitations

This study provides interesting insights into some of the early outcomes of college for a somewhat unique group of African American students. In addition to the small sample size and the sample's uniqueness, it was not known what types of Masters

degrees students received, were pursuing or desired. Obviously, there was a great deal of difference between a Masters of Arts in teaching and a Masters of Business Administration. These differences affect both short and long term outcomes. The qualitative sample, although providing insight, was also small and from four rather selective institutions. As such, I believe it was a good match with the uniqueness of the quantitative sample. However, because of that uniqueness, the results, qualitative or quantitative, may not have represented a generalized African American college student population.

Conclusions/Significance

This study illustrated African American students' outcomes of attending four year colleges or universities using both longitudinal quantitative data and rich qualitative data. These students clearly have successfully converted their college degrees to positions in the workforce and half also reinvested in graduate school attendance. The variables that predicted graduate school attendance by 1994 -- being female, having a high GPA, planning to attend graduate school and an intrinsic career orientation -- were interesting because variables measuring involvement in the campus community did not enter the equation and because overall, African American students report modest GPA's. Part of this result may have been due to the small sample size and the unique characteristics of the sample. However it may indicate a unique habitus that favors conversion and reinvestment in graduate school attendance.

The qualitative sample provided insight into the quantitative results. The students who were interviewed for the study experienced academic difficulty and almost half of the students had changed their major because of it. However, although the

students changed their aspirations, they did not diminish them. This may be indicative of a habitus that valued graduate level education and could improvise alternate strategies to obtain this goal, which was not surprising given that 11 students had at least one parent with a graduate degree. That graduate school experience provided those families with cultural capital regarding graduate school expectations and admission.

The crosstabulation results indicated differences in conversion and reinvestment for students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. High SES students reported higher incomes and higher rates of graduate school attendance, particularly for MD's and JD's, indicative of a high status habitus. Low SES students were less likely to have attended graduate school by 1994, aspired to Masters degrees in higher percentages and may have a longer time line for graduate school attendance. These finding indicated a unique habitus for the low SES students as well.

These results are significant because although African American students have been and will be the focus of policymakers, little is known about the impact and outcomes of college for these students. Such knowledge is increasingly important given the current challenges to affirmative action and the role of such programs in building an African American middle class. This study contributes new insight into the impact and outcomes of African American college students providing needed information for policy considerations.

The study also provides useful information for practitioners. The continuing academic disadvantage African Americans have when entering college must be addressed more vigorously. Math, science and writing were the three academic areas most often mentioned, but many students also mentioned a lack of study skills. Summer academic

programs and support throughout the academic years are critical to assisting these students, particularly those focused on majors in math and science areas. Furthermore, student affairs professionals, particularly at PWI's need to foster campus activities that appeal to African American students. Involvement has been shown to promote a host of positive effects in college students (Astin, 1993), and there is no reason to believe African American students could not benefit as well.

Researchers can additionally benefit from the results of this study. The quantitative sample was small, and the sub-samples of low and high SES students even smaller. Larger and more representative samples may provide additional insights into student outcomes, particularly as they relate to the socioeconomic background of the student. There is an increasing debate regarding the importance of social class within the African American community and studies of African American college students can contribute needed information.

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Appendix A
Variable Blocks

Dependent Variable = Attended Graduate School

Pre-Test
1985 Degree Aspirations

Input Block
Sex
SAT Verbal
SES

Institutional Characteristics Block
HBCU

College Investment Block
Worked on Prof. Research
Worked Full Time
Took Part in Intercollegiate Athletics
HPW Studying
HPW Talking w/ Faculty Out. Class
HPW Student Clubs/Groups
College GPA

College Conversion Block
89 Plan Attend Grad School
89 Plan Travel
Degree Asp. 1989
Reas. for Career Intrinsic-=Interesting Work, Challenging Work,
Contrib. to Society, Opp. for Freedom of Act.
Reas. for Career Extrinsic-=Job Opps, Pays Well, Opp. for Advancement

Table 1: Crosstabulation: Results of Student Outcomes

Students Who Reported:	% All Students (n=365)	% Low-SES (n=72)	% Hi-SES (n=73)
'94 Working Full-time	83	94	78
'94 Income <$30K	53	61	47
'94 Income $30-49K	43	35	46
Work FT.-Income <$30K	45	59	33
Work FT.-Income $30-49	49	36	58
Attended Graduate School	50	37	63
Attended Grad. Sc.-Income <$30K	51	61	50
Highest Degree earned '94- BA	65	75	51
Highest Degree earned '94- MA	16	9	16
Highest Degree earned '94- MD	4	1	10
Highest Degree earned '94-JD	6	1	16
Highest Degree planned '94-MA	36	40	18
Highest Degree planned '94-Ph.D.	33	30	36
Highest Degree planned '94-MD	7	8	14
Highest Degree planned '94-JD	11	6	18
Currently enrolled in school	24	26	18
Degree Working on '94-MA	28	30	15
Degree Working on '94-Ph.D.	7	2	8
Degree Working on '94-MD	3	2	8
Degree Working on '94-JD	2	2	5
Plan to return to school 1-2 years	36	43	31
No return planned	24	22	40

Table 2: Odds Ratios[1] for Blocked Variables DV= Attended Graduate School

Variable Name	Students (n=215)
1985 Degree Aspirations	.890 (-.805)
SAT Verbal	1.00 (.588)
Sex-Female	2.63* (2.38)
College GPA	1.65* (2.53)
'89 Plan to attend grad. school	16.57*** (4.25)
'89 Plan to travel	.132 (-1.87)
Reason for career- intrinsic	1.23* (2.58)

[1] Ratio of the odds of attending graduate school due to an a one-unit increase in the independent variable to the odds of not attending graduate school without that change. Numbers in parentheses indicate the ratio of the regression coefficient to its standard error. ***p<.0001, **p<.001, *p<.05

Table 3: Students' Degree Aspirations in Percentages (n=365)

Degree Aspirations:	1985	1989	1994
BA	19	9	6
MA	31	36	36
PhD	21	29	33
MD	19	9	7
JD	8	14	11

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